

**PRIVATE SECTOR  
VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL STAKEHOLDER GROUP**

05/22/2006, Tumwater WA  
Minutes

***VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROVIDERS***

**Attendees**

Michael Barron, IAM Crest  
Cathy Cottingham, People Systems, Inc.  
Sheryl Cousineau, Sheryl's Rehab Service  
Patti Kacz, Intracorp  
April Poier, Grant and Associates  
Bradley Ehrlich, Career Opportunity Group  
Kari D'Aboy, Career Horizon  
Jenipher Gaffney, Gaffney Counseling  
Nancy Ziegler, Broadspire

**Absent**

Fred Cutler, Cutler Counseling  
Jill Rosenthal, Int. Assoc. Rehab Professionals  
Todd Gendreau, Strategic Consulting

***DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIES***

**Attendees**

Rheo Aieta  
Rich Wilson  
Don Lane  
Donna Spencer  
Keith Klinger  
Janice Orcutt  
Terry Thomas

**Audience Members**

Russ Hauss, Labor & Industries  
Vickie Kennedy, Labor & Industries  
Sarah Martin, Labor & Industries  
Mardi Sarjent, Labor & Industries  
Kathryn Hudson, Rainier Case Management  
Mark Provo, Achieve Consulting  
DT North, Achieve Consulting  
Ashley Towanda, Achieve Consulting  
Cathy Whiteman, West Vocational Services  
Bettie Westcott, Favorite Associates

**Welcome & Review Minutes – Rheo Aieta**

The minutes from the March 27, 2006 VTSG meeting were reviewed and approved. Todd Gendreau was not present, but he was introduced as the newest member of the VTSG committee as the new IARP President.

### **Announcements – Rheo Aieta**

Rheo provided a review of everyone's membership terms. The 2003-2006 three year terms for Jill Rosenthal, Terry McCall, and Michael Barron have ended. Cory Turner's term as IARP President has also ended. Their participation and contributions have been appreciated. Selection of two new at-large members is anticipated prior to the July VTSG meeting. Rheo announced that a new auditor for PSRS, Todd Wiley and a new reviewer for VDRO, Julie Jo, were hired.

### **Announcements – Rich Wilson**

Sarah Martin has been hired for the position of Therapy Services Coordinator. Sarah will be the primary department liaison for matters pertaining to physical and occupational therapy, including work hardening, and for job modification. She is also responsible for home and vehicle modification requests.

The Vocational Purchasing Manager position, a newly created position that the department had begun recruiting for earlier this year, was eliminated due to budget restrictions.

The Return-to-Work Services program continues to recruit for vocational services consultant positions across the agency. We have current openings in PSRS, VDRO, claims and in some regional offices.

### **Announcements – Keith Klinger**

April 26, 2006

A cost of living adjustment increase of 2.3% will take effect July 1, 2006. The increase affects the maximum fees billable by vocational providers for professional services. The new fees are for services performed on or after July 1, 2006. For more information, go to the [Medical Providers Billing & Payment](#) web site.

The next Vocational Spring Conference is Friday June 16<sup>th</sup> at the Department of Labor and Industries. Please consider carpooling as parking is limited.

### **Announcements – Donna Spencer**

#### **Orca BPM Project**

The department contracted with a company called HCL Inc to help implement a Business Process Management system. Business Process Management is a systematic approach to improving an organization's business processes by using technology. The BPM Project will make claims management activity **event** driven rather than **calendar** driven.

The goal of the project is to create an integrated desk top—so claim managers have one place to view phone calls, suspended payments and bills, new reports of accident, ticklers and surgery requests. The system will also help manage processes such as occupational disease claim allowance, appropriate and timely payment of time-loss benefits, and medical and vocational management.

The system will:

- Integrate information and documents from LINIIS and LUCI
- Provide alerts to notify claim managers of urgent information
- Automatically prioritize incoming documents like reopening applications, RTW or ATW outcomes, or BIIA orders.

The project is scheduled to have recommendations to executive management by the end of June with implementation scheduled for Spring 2007.

### **Preferred Worker Enhancement Project – Donna Spencer**

During a recent enhancement project, the project's risk manager requested a way to market the Preferred Worker Program to employers. A calculation table was designed and added to the Preferred Worker Program website. Inputting the occupational risk code and the experience factor will automatically calculate the difference between hiring a non-preferred worker and a preferred worker.

Vocational providers might use the calculation table when developing an OJT or marketing a RTW to employers. The table may also be used to encourage workers to share the program with new employers for a pay increase since workers do not have to pay into the accident or medical aide fund when using the program. Currently, the calculation table can be accessed through What's New? but will permanently reside on the Preferred Worker website.

### **Vocational Rehabilitation Improvement Initiative Update – Rich Wilson**

Rich noted that the sub-group working on vocational provider education and accountability issues was recently given executive approval to move forward with recommendations that have been identified. These recommendations include:

- Display open referral numbers by VRC on LINIIS referral screen
- Limit VRCs to branches in three contiguous service locations
- Develop a process to require that all VRCs and interns who provide services on a referral are identified in progress reports
- Do not place a cap on the number of open referrals a VRC may have

Information was presented on analysis that the department performed in reaching these recommendations. Rich noted that the recommendations, together with the analysis, would be posted on the vocational web site under initiative updates. The committee identified a number of questions and suggestions pertaining to the recommendations:

- Consider displaying the number of interns available to assist on referrals
- Make sure the transition length of time is adequate to resolve open referrals
- Clarify how long the application period will last
- Clarify what the vehicle will be to accomplish "re-application" (new application; change form; etc.)
- Will providers who are not making a change have to re-apply?

### **New process for non-cooperation and suspension – Don Lane**

In an effort to reduce the recycling of claims where non-cooperation with vocational services is an issue, a new process for suspending claims has been developed. VRCs will need to keep the following in mind when worker non-cooperation with vocational services begins to develop.

**Key points to remember:**

- CM has to send a good cause letter to the worker. The worker has 30 days to respond to this letter. The vocational counselor must leave the vocational referral open during this phase.
- **In AWA** if VRC has obtained work history, proceed with transferable skills analysis, job analysis development, labor market surveys, etc
- **In plan development** if testing is completed proceed with developing potential retraining goals including job analysis development, labor market surveys, identifying potential retraining sites, etc
- **In plan implementation phase**, complete analysis to determine if IW is employable based on training completed to date. If not employable, list what classes need to be completed to reach employable status, and what the options might be available.

**VRC Role**

- Keep specific information on the worker's non-cooperation with vocational services to include missed appointments, assignments not completed and efforts to work with the worker to gain cooperation
- Obtain all information needed from worker to bring a referral to completion as quickly as possible such as complete work history, complete vocational aptitude/interesting testing,
- Once suspension order has been issued VRC will need to staff possible vocational closure with the unit VSC. If no additional work can be completed to bring referral to completion it is likely the vocational referral can be closed out. However, if additional work can be completed it is expected VRC will proceed with efforts to finalize vocational outcome. Non-cooperation and suspension guidelines can be found on the Vocational website. <http://www.lni.wa.gov/ClaimsIns/Providers/Vocational/default.asp>

**Claim and Account Center Access / Ortho-Neuro Pilot Project (APF) – Rich Wilson**

Rich asked the committee for their assistance in reviewing a draft communication to be posted on the vocational web site. The communication tells vocational providers that they now (as of 5/22/06) have access to the Claim and Account Center (CAC). The communication includes links to information about registration, and also answers to frequently asked questions. The committee was supportive of the communication.

The committee was also asked to review a draft communication of a letter to be sent to all vocational providers. The letter explains that the new Ortho-Neuro pilot project will begin 7-1-06. The project will utilize a new form – the Activity Prescription Form. The letter asks for vocational providers to cooperate with the pilot by utilizing the CAC to check for medical information **prior** to writing to doctors to ask them for this information. The letter also explains that if the pilot is successful, then a larger system wide rollout of the process is expected. The committee offered suggestions for formatting of the letter to help ensure that it will be read upon receipt.

## **VTSG led item –**

### **The following portion was submitted by Bradley Ehrlich, VTSG member**

Goal: To help Claims Managers make a wiser choice as to when to purchase Vocational Services. Please note the term Vocational Services to mean any type of referral code.

Outcome: Determine if the Injured Worker is ready for a Vocational referral.

Since Claims Managers are in a conundrum since there are conflicting goals (refer earlier but not too early, a Stand Alone Vocational Readiness (SAVR) was proposed. A SAVR referral would be time sensitive and costs capped. A SAVR referral outcome would be coded similarly to a Stand Alone Job Analysis referral. Once a VRC conducts a SAVR assignment, that VRC could not receive another type of referral (Forensic WAC could be used for guidance) on the Claim. This would lend more diversity of vocational expertise on the file, as well as prevent any appearance of conflict of interest.

When would a SAVR referral be made?

No longer than 90 days from the date of injury. Currently there is a gap between the Early Return-to-Work Initiative and the Center of Occupational Health and Education (COHE) referrals, and when the Claims Managers need to make a Vocational referral at 120 days.

A SAVR referral would not:

- Recommend what type of Vocational Referral should or should not be made.
- Determine the Worker's motivation.
- Require a visit to the work place
- Create a Functional Job Analysis
- Make a Vocational Recommendation

## **Audience Comments**

Cathy Whiteman emphasized that obtaining information from doctors is a VRC's biggest challenge. She also suggested that any effort to obtain "medical readiness" verification from a doctor should include RTW restrictions.

Bettie Westcott commented that the new Activity Prescription Form is a "good start"

***The next VTSG meeting will be in Tukwilla July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2006***